

Mojave-Southern and Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Councils (RAC)

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, July 19, 2012

U.S. Highway 93, Warm Creek Ranch exit

Mojave-Southern Great Basin RAC members present and category represented:

Joni Eastley, Chairperson	Elected Official	Category 3
Julie Von Tobel Gleason, vice-Chair	Wild Horse & Burro	Category 1
Kenny Anderson	Native American	Category 3
Douglas "Stretch" Baker	Transportation/ROW	Category 1
Ed Higbee	Ranching/Grazing	Category 1
Jane Feldman	Environmental	Category 2
Ronda Hornbeck	Public at Large	Category 3
Elise McAllister	Dispersed Recreation	Category 2
Gracian Uhalde	Ranching/Grazing	Category 1

Northeastern Great Basin RAC members present and category represented:

Jeff White, Chairman	Energy/Minerals	Category 1
Laurie Carson	Elected Official	Category 3
Anthony Carone	Energy/Minerals	Category 1
Vince Garcia	Native American Tribes	Category 3
Bruce Holmgren	State Agency	Category 3
Larry Hyslop	Wildlife	Category 2
Cyd McMullen	Archaeology	Category 2
David Meisner	Academia	Category 3
Jeanne Nations	Wild Horse & Burro	Category 2
John Prier	Environment	Category 2

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Ken Miller	BLM Elko District Manager, DFO NEGBRAC
Mary Jo Rugwell	BLM Southern Nevada District Manager, DFO MSGBRAC
Doug Furtado	BLM Battle Mountain District Manager
Rosemary Thomas	BLM Ely District Manager
Michael Herder	BLM Associate Ely District Manager
Bryan Fuell	BLM Elko District, Wells Field Manager
Tom Seley	BLM Battle Mountain District, Tonopah Field Manager
Victoria Barr	BLM Ely District, Caliente Field Manager
Lesli Ellis-Wouters	BLM Elko District Public Affairs Specialist
Chris Hanefeld	BLM Ely District Public Affairs Specialist
Tara North	BLM Ely District Manager Administration Assistance

Public members present

Judy Bumdorf	Public
Wayne Bumdorf	Public
Ron Cerri	Nevada Cattlemen's Association
Marlow Dahl	Rancher
John Falen	Rancher
Mike Gleason	Public
Callie Hendrickson	National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board
Kenneth Jones	Rancher
Jolynn Laubacher	Writer, Nevada Rancher Magazine
Clay Nannini	Warm Creek Ranch
Rick Neal	Public
Desiree Seal	Nevada Cattlemen's Association
June Sewing	National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board
Boyd Spratling	National Wild Horse & Burro Advisory Board
Annette White	Public

A copy of each attachment is listed in the text of or at the end of these minutes and is also on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Elko and Southern Nevada district offices of the BLM. Persons desiring to review said minutes should contact Lesli Ellis-Wouters, BLM Elko District public affairs specialist, at (775) 753-0386 or Hillerie Patton, BLM Southern Nevada District public affairs specialist, at (702) 515-5046.

10:15 a.m. Jeff White, Northeastern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council (RAC) chairperson; the meeting was called to order and introductions were conducted.

Jeff White opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and provided safety information for the field trip. He cautioned everyone to stay on trails, avoid causing fires, and to keep covered and hydrated. Water was provided in various vehicles for all attendees.

Ken Miller welcomed all attendees and discussed the topics to be covered during the two-day field tour.

Rosemary Thomas spoke about the agenda in Ely for Friday's field tours:

Mary Jo Rugwell addressed the attendees and thanked them for their support over the last four years in her role as designated federal official (DFO). She is leaving at the end of August to become the Associate State Director for Wyoming BLM.

Bryan Fuell spoke about the Warm Creek Ranch and Snow Water Lake Allotments owned by Saving America's Mustangs (SAM). The Elko District Office is analyzing a permit renewal and request to convert cattle Animal Unit Months (AUMs) to horse AUMs. This change from cattle to horse will be 1.2 - 1.3 AUMs. The draft Environmental Assessment was distributed three months ago.

Bryan Fuell discussed the Eco-Sanctuary proposal submitted by SAM. The proposal will utilize 550,000 acres of public lands, currently grazing allotments tied to the Warm Creek Ranch. All male horses will be gelded. SAM will follow Nevada law on shots and vaccinations. The Eco-Sanctuary will need to be fenced.

This EA is separate from the EIS for the SAM proposal for an Eco-Sanctuary. The Eco-Sanctuary proposal requests adding 800-900 horses that will be owned by BLM. The 500 horses currently at Warm Creek Ranch are domestic and will need to follow the required brand laws and same requirements as a horse permit. Warm Creek Ranch will serve as Pickens ecotourism area and a possible grazing area for the wild horses of the eco sanctuary should feed be limited.

The Standards and Guidelines for Warm Creek and Snow Water are the same for all public land grazing allotments.

Questions by RAC members:

“Who will build the fence?”

Bryan- Still being discussed between BLM and SAM

“Why is SAM called Saving America’s Mustangs when there is not a mustang on the property?”

No answer

“Are the private horses currently branded?”

Clay- Answered, no not at this time but they would be branded if they were turned out on public land. Right now horses are staying on the private land owned by Ms. Pickens

“When does public comment period open?”

Bryan- Answered talked about dates of public meetings and the comment period.

Clay Naninni spoke on behalf of SAM about the purpose of the Eco-Sanctuary to be an interpretive center with a tourism component. There will be lodging, wagon rides. SAM will also take emergency conditions into consideration, i.e., drought, heavy snow and SAM will also grow hay to supplement feed for the wild horse herd on the Eco-Sanctuary should the need arise. SAM will brand all livestock that are privately owned and will be managed on the private property/allowed allotments, subject to change of livestock request.

11:00 a.m. **Travel to Antelope Valley HMA**

Working Lunch

1:30 p.m. **Eco-Sanctuary**

Bryan Fuell spoke about the 550,000 acres of the Spruce Allotment to be used for the Eco-Sanctuary. The allotment is currently not in an HMA or Herd Area. The proposal is for 900 horses.

BLM solicited for proposals for private lands and a mix of public and private lands. This proposed eco-sanctuary is for public and private lands.

An Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. The Notice of Intent to prepare the EIS is in the Washington Office for review. The Wells Field Office will conduct the scoping.

The proposed 900-head Eco-Sanctuary would contain government-owned, federally protected Wild Horses.

Issues to be analyzed in the EIS will be resource issues such as water; whether to remove the allotment from the N1 grazing district; whether it should be a reproductive or non-reproductive herd. According to SAM, the herd will be a non-reproductive herd and will be composed of all geldings.

The proposal will go through public scoping and the Elko Office will review all alternatives, to include the no-action alternative. The BLM will need the public to review the draft EIS in order to assist in writing the final.

SAM would receive a stipend per horse to provide care. Federal, state and local governments will no longer receive grazing fees, but Ms. Pickens did agree to pay a stipend to the county in lieu of grazing fees.

Comments and Questions from RAC members:

BLM is paying for the care of the horses now on the HMA but under the Pickens' proposal, BLM would pay her federal money to take care of the same horses on the same land. Therefore, the tax payer would be paying for the horses to be cared for and managed twice.

Q. Are horses at AML now?

No they are over AML by about 500. BLM had to stop the gather last year because they got too far into foaling season and some of the mares were too heavy, so for the safety of the horses BLM felt it best to stop the gather before they reached AML.

Clay Nannini addressed assisting the local economy with tourism and lodging. He also reiterated the Eco-Sanctuary would be an educational place and it will be a non-profit 501(c).

Q. Will there be access for hunters during hunting season? Will there be a conflict between hunters and tourism?

Nanini and Fuell - said SAM will have to obtain recreation permits for their own tourism business on public lands and assured that multiple uses will still be in effect on the allotments, allowing for hunting and other forms of recreation.

Bryan Fuell stated there is only sage grouse habitat by the Warm Creek ranch.

Bryan Fuell asked the RACs to provide input for public scoping. He anticipates a decision by April 2014.

2:30 p.m.

Drought Management

Doug Furtado spoke about drought issues. In January, he began to address the upcoming issues for BLM on Battle Mountain District. He issued an EA to mitigate livestock grazing and resource protection. He signed the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for temporary non-use and other options such as temporary fencing.

Also addressed were concerns about wild horse & burro removal and/or relocation. He talked about hauling water, suitable forage and moving livestock. The BLM needs to keep horses at Appropriate Management Level (AML).

He talked with county commissioners and permittees. Resource specialists have collected data and are finding large-scale resource damage. Animals are having respiratory issues. BLM wrote this EA early to have a greater degree of flexibility.

A RAC member indicated there is a BLM State directive to mitigate drought; we as the public and RAC members need to write letters and plead for relief, let horses stay on the land longer. Questions about grazing for other livestock came up. We need to ask our commissioners questions on how to reduce our horse issues. We need to remove 18 thousand horses across the West; this should be a question that is on all State Directors. In the late 1990s -mid 2000 livestock permits were reduced.

The horse gathers that are planned for 2013 are up for discussion and might be canceled because of the drought issues. BLM is considering the risk of the horse gathers, and are evaluating how to gather clean and stop reproduction. There are mixed feeling on sterilizing the horses. BLM is working on this issue with the public. On the 17th of this month the Governor declared Nevada a Drought Emergency.

NLCS Strategies (The National Landscape Conservation System)

Mike Herder spoke about NLCS strategies. The Grand Staircase National Monument was placed in the NLCS 15 years ago. The strategy is to conserve, protect and restore natural landscape values and determine how the land should be used. NLCS involves National Conservation Areas, Wilderness Areas, National Historic and Scenic Trails, and other units.

The draft management strategies will be available for public review by mid-August.

A booklet was distributed to provide an overview of management practices. (On file in Elko District Office)

3:10 p.m.

Triple B Horse Gather

Bryan Fuell talked about the necessity for water/bait trapping within the Triple B Complex. Currently the Elko District is hauling water to two springs. Deer Springs currently has approximately 60 horses sitting on the springs.

The Elko District is currently developing an EA to cover a five-year plan for this activity.

At Cherry Springs in Maverick-Medicine HMA, livestock have not grazed since 2001. The water trapping will not be used as an AML tool. Right now, everything that is caught will be removed. Contractors will be paid per horse, but logistics on the operation are still being worked out.

The spring is used by elk, deer and antelope. The Elko District has hauled 1,000 gallons in the last 1 ½ days to Cherry Springs. Half of the horses will move to the Ruby marshes, but the other half won't leave the springs.

Continuation of SAM discussions: A small group of RAC members and public went to see the spring source within the HMA where BLM has been hauling water. BLM recently installed a guzzler and new water trough and has been hauling water to the horses. There is no natural water source on the western part of the Spruce-Pequot HMA. In addition, there is significant resource damage around the water. Clay mentioned that SAM has agreed to install more water and improved water developments at their cost.

4:15 p.m.

Jeff White adjourned the meeting.

APPROVED BY:

Date: _____

Joni Eastley, Chairperson

Mojave-Southern Great Basin
Resource Advisory Council

Date: _____

Jeff White, Chairperson
Northeastern Great Basin
Resource Advisory Council

- Minutes provided by Tara North, BLM Ely District Office -

Attachments:

1. Joint RAC Field Tour Packet July 19 & 20, 2012
2. Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the North Schell Restoration Project
3. The National Landscape Conservation System 2010-2025